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ABSTRACT

This is a resource booklet designed to facilitate the involvement of all citizens, not just parents, in the public schools. Citizen involvement in education is examined from an historical perspective, and legal mandates for citizen involvement in the state of New Jersey are outlined. Presented in the pamphlet are guidelines for the formation of citizen advisory committees and information on school site management. Three examples of citizen participation in schools from New Jersey are highlighted, along with additional examples drawn from Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Delaware. The experiences of State mandated programs in Florida, South Carolina, and California are also explored. The Teaneck Parent Information Center, a community school project in New Jersey, is discussed and suggested as a possible resource. Then the functions and possibilities of community schools are reviewed. A list of informational sources, organizations and publications concludes the book. (APM)

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CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS — TRENDS FOR THE '80s

Written by
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January, 1981

Published by
NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

A non-profit, statewide organization, the New Jersey School Boards Association is a federation of all the State's local school boards. It serves as advocate for the interests of New Jersey's public school students and school districts, and provides in-service training and technical assistance for the State's boards of education.

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CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION 4

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE 5

LEGAL MANDATES FOR CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN NEW JERSEY 6

GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES 7

SCHOOL SITE MANAGEMENT 9

THREE FROM NEW JERSEY — Penns Grove Regional High School, Rumson Borough, and Salem City High School 10

FOUR FROM ACROSS THE NATION — Louisville, William Penn School District, Salt Lake City, and Wilmington 14

STATE MANDATED PROGRAMS — The Experience of Florida, South Carolina, and California 17

TEANECK PARENT INFORMATION CENTER (TPIC) 20

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS 22

SOURCES OF HELP AND INFORMATION 24

RESOURCE PUBLICATIONS 27

INTRODUCTION

In April of 1980, the New Jersey School Boards Association identified citizen involvement in the public schools as an important concern for the future of public education in the United States.

The Association issued a white paper addressing the issue and specifying concerns. In addition, a staff task force was appointed to follow through — researching and generating information in usable form, building interest in the education community and encouraging school boards to carefully consider a variety of options.

Since then, the task force has proceeded on several fronts. As the white paper was disseminated, communications were established with a number of other education groups. At the same time, research was undertaken in order to build a base of information. A special issue of the Association's official publication, *School Leader*, focused specifically on school site councils, while an inservice training session offered guidance on citizen involvement and a policy planning workshop centered upon the same theme.

Several other projects are being implemented, including a sample policy portfolio and a public service project which would build public interest and confidence in the schools.

This resource book is another project developed under the direction of the Task Force in order to inform those school boards in New Jersey and the nation which seek to expand their base of support by building citizen involvement.

As an organized source of information, it is intended to help boards of education identify improved and increased opportunities for citizen participation in the public education process.

Thanks are due to Toby Simon, project specialist in the Association's Inservice Education Department, who compiled and prepared the text of this book, and to the members of the Task Force itself: Lenore Greenberg, Chairperson of the Task Force on Citizen Involvement in the Public Schools and Director of Communications for NJSBA; Philip E. Mackey, Director of Management Information; Barbara Hansen, Director of Inservice Education; and Dennis Crowley, Assistant Director of Governmental Relations.

Lloyd Newbaker
Executive Director, NJSBA

Trenton, New Jersey
January, 1981

5

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Citizen involvement in education has been a keystone of the American school system since the beginnings of our country. In the early days, as settlers developed communities and began setting up schools for their children, everything was run by townspeople — building the school, hiring and housing the teacher, deciding on textbooks and materials, cleaning the school, and making needed repairs. There were no school boards, no administrators. The school belonged to everyone in the truest sense of the word -- because everyone was involved and responsible for it.

As towns grew, however, and the number of students increased, the complexities of running the schools grew also. Citizens no longer had enough time nor enough expertise to manage all aspects of a school system by themselves, and the present system of lay boards of education, making policy for professionals to administer, slowly evolved. Today, for the vast majority of people across America, citizen involvement in education is limited to voting for school board members or belonging to a parent/teacher organization. And the number of citizens who participate even to this extent becomes less each year.

Some experts believe this lack of involvement is one of the main reasons for the decline in public support for — and confidence in — the schools. They call for a renewal of community involvement in the schools through substantive roles in decision-making and policy development.

In researching this booklet, a tremendous number of programs that involve parents with their own children's education was discovered. The focus of this booklet, however, is on programs which involve the different members of a community in a substantive manner in the schools. Parent involvement usually means an emphasis on relations with the school which revolve mainly around a family's own child, his/her education. PTA activities and volunteer duties within the school, such as librarian or typist, also fall under this heading.

Citizen involvement, as defined in this booklet, has a different emphasis. First, those involved do not necessarily have children in the schools. And second, the type of involvement is more substantive in terms of school management. These committees normally have input in areas of testing, report cards, textbook approval, curriculum additions and revisions, and student activities. They may even have some decision-making powers in these areas granted to them by the board of education.

The purpose of this booklet is to examine such citizen involvement, to describe the main forms it takes, to report on examples from across the country and within New Jersey, and to provide information on reference works and organizations which can further help readers in making their own decisions about the value of such programs in their own districts.

LEGAL MANDATES FOR CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN NEW JERSEY

N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-5

A thorough and efficient system of free public schools shall include the following major elements, which shall serve as guidelines for the achievement of the legislative goal and the implementation of this act:

b. Encouragement of public involvement in the establishment of educational goals;

N.J.A.C. 6:8-3.3

(a) Written educational goals, based on district educational needs and consistent with the intent of State educational goals, shall be developed and shall serve as the basis for the educational program (curriculum) for each school. Goals shall be developed in consultation with teaching staff members, pupils, parents or guardians of pupils, and other district residents, under the direction of the chief school administrator.

N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-11. Annual Report of Local School District.

Each school district shall make an annual report of its progress in conforming to the goals, objectives, and standards developed pursuant to this act. Each district's annual report shall include but not be limited to:

a. Demographic data related to each school;
b. Results of assessment programs, including Statewide, and district testing conducted at each school, and the result of the district evaluation of pupil proficiency in basic communication and computational skills;
c. Information on each school's fiscal operation, including the budget of each school;
d. Results of each school's effectiveness in achieving State, district, and school goals and objectives applicable to the pupils, including the effectiveness of any "basic skills improvement plan";
e. Plans and programs for professional improvement;
f. Plans to carry out innovative or experimental educational programs designed to improve the quality of education; and
g. Recommendations for school improvements during the ensuing year

h. Additionally, the State Board of Education may, from time to time, require each district to submit a facilities survey, including current use practices and projected capital project needs, but not more frequently than once every two years.

The district reports shall be submitted to the Commissioner by July 1 of each year, and he shall make them the basis for an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature, describing the condition of education in New Jersey, the efforts of New Jersey schools in meeting the standards of a thorough and efficient education, the steps underway to correct deficiences in school performance, and the progress of New Jersey schools in comparison to other state education systems in the United States.

These excerpts, from the New Jersey Statutes Annotated and the New Jersey Administrative Code, form the basis of citizen involvement requirements in the state at this time. If the State Board of Education were to mandate additional involvement of local community people in the schools, they would base such requirements upon these statute and code requirements.

In addition, under *N.J.A.C.* 6:8-4.6, School and Community Relations, district boards are required to "provide parents or guardians, other district residents and teaching staff members opportunities through one or more public meetings of the board of education for discussion, regarding state regulations and local school procedures for implementation of district goals, objectives and standards." This Code revision, approved by the State Board of Education in November, 1979, includes requirements for making available to the community copies of the district evaluation, the annual report, the results of the Minimum Basic Skills test, various needs assessments, remedial plans, and budget requirements to meet all of the above.

GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Information from those districts around the country which have instituted various kinds of formal citizen committees to work with their local schools can help in setting down guidelines for others to follow in doing the same. Whichever type of citizen group one may be considering, whatever the depth of involvement or authority, experience has shown that certain considerations should be included to ensure effectiveness.

For example, the Board of Education should make clear the nature of the committee from the start. Is it to be advisory only in character? Or in fact, do they intend to grant some decision-making authority to the new group?

Any responsibility and/or authority delegated to the committee should be clearly defined and specified in writing, and distributed to all school personnel, committee members, and interested citizens. It is also an excellent idea to have a complete report on the committee and how it will work published in the local newspaper or district newsletter, so that the community is kept informed as well.

General committee guidelines should be established by the board of education. Specific bylaws for the working of the committee should be determined by the members themselves, within the authority granted them by the district. The board should ensure that committee membership will be broadly representative of the school community and will include members from parent, teacher, non-parent citizen, and administrative groups. Students, where appropriate, should also be represented. All interest groups and minorities within that community should sit on the committee.

In order to believe in what they are doing and to commit the time and effort necessary to do an effective job, the community members of any committee must see that their participation is substantive, and that they are more than just a public relations tool. Recommendations and reports from such a committee should always be acknowledged and seriously considered by an administrator or board of education. If they are approved and carried out, the committee should be informed and given public credit. If they are not, the committee and public should be given clear explanation and reasons why not. In fact, a public meeting, during which the committee reports its findings to the Board of Education, is a useful way to inform the community about the issue and show the committee that its work is being accorded full consideration. However, it is generally advisable for the Board to reserve the right to consider the committee findings in full before rendering a decision and rationale.

Information and data required by the committee for their decision-making should be available to them, unless they are of a private or privileged nature. In addition, the committee should be provided with adequate resources and staff assistance to allow them to do the kind of job that they can feel proud of. And finally, the Board of Education should provide the committee with precise timelines for the entire project from start to finish, so that all concerned share common expectations.

The three main ingredients of a successful citizen committee then, are (1) consistent and sincere support and consideration by the board of education and those administrators involved, (2) clearly specified functions, authority and timelines written down and distributed among all involved, and (3) committee access to necessary and substantive information.

SCHOOL SITE MANAGEMENT

Wes Apker, Executive Director of the National Association of State Boards of Education has said "...the largest single unit for effective change is the school building. Public polls, for example, indicate that although people do not generally have confidence in education, they become enthusiastic about their local school. Citizens are most interested in involvement in the instructional process and participation in budgeting, as it is translated into programs. They identify most with their role as parents. But as parents, they are becoming aware that they are powerless, and that decisions are being made over which they have no control."

The philosophy behind school site management is that those community members who are involved with a local school because of their children's attendance, or because they reside in the area from which the school draws its students, should also be involved in the management decisions governing that school. This is accomplished by the formation of school site councils, which often have the authority and responsibility for management decisions.

Policy decisions having district-wide impact remain the responsibility of the local board of education. The board also develops the district budget. Approximately 80% of most budget funds are fixed anyway — by utility rates, insurance, salaries and benefits, busing, and special education costs. The remainder of the budget is used for equipment and supplies, textbooks and program materials, and building maintenance. It is often the site council's responsibility to decide how these remaining funds would be spent.

The council may be responsible for setting the goals and objectives for its school and for selecting curricular materials to meet those goals and objectives. Skill minimums and curriculum standards are established district-wide by the board of education, but it is the local council which makes the decisions on how best to meet those requirements.

In the most common model, the school site council would be made up of an equal number of community members and teachers. The principal is always a member. The council itself selects its chairman, but all members have an equal voice and vote in decision-making. No one person can veto actions of the council. Areas of responsibility and accountability are clearly spelled out by the board of education. Strict accounting and reporting procedures are required by the central administration, and student testing is commonly administered district-wide to evaluate student learning.

The rationale behind the establishment of school site councils is explained by Larry Pierce in *School Site Management*. He states "the most

important contact between school personnel and families takes place not at the district level, but at the school site. Parents and students are more interested in their particular school than in the district, and consequently, they are more likely to become involved at the school site. Furthermore, by dividing districts into school units, the opportunities for parent participation are increased, while the scope of education problems considered and the number of people involved at any one meeting is reduced. This makes it easier to respond to parent preference likewise, it increases the chance of any one parent to influence school policy. Finally, school site management gives those education professionals most familiar with a student's problems — the principal and teachers — greater responsibility for the education of children. Since the education needs of children within a school and between schools are not always the same, the principal and teachers in a school are in the best position to respond to those differences."

For those desiring more information about school site management, a fine resource is the Schoolwatch handbook for parents, *Introducing School Site Management: A Framework For Citizen Involvement*, from which the discussion above was adopted. The handbook covers in greater detail how site councils work, where they are working, and how they can be implemented, particularly in New Jersey.

For those who are considering implementation of school site councils or something similar, another outstanding resource on the subject is, *How To Make The Best School Site Council In The World, A Guidebook for School Improvement Councils and Other School-Community Groups.* Written by Jean Rosaler for the California State Department of Education, it is a thorough and practical guide to forming, organizing, planning and operating school site councils.

THREE FROM NEW JERSEY —
Penns Grove Regional High School, Rumson Borough, and Salem City High School

All districts in New Jersey can certainly point out some program in their schools which involve parents. Library volunteers, PTA efforts, band parents, chaperones for trips and sports events, media aides and clerical help — the list could go on and on. Districts involving their citizens in more substantive ways, however, are harder to find. Those that have been doing so for a while and consider their program positive and successful are even fewer in number. The following three illustrate that community members, not on a school board and not paid staff

members, can have an important and responsible role in the running of a school system. This is happening now in Penns Grove Regional High School, Rumson Borough, and Salem City High School.

Penns Grove Regional High School

The parent action committees in Penns Grove sprang up in the early 70's when the United States was experiencing protests of all kinds. They existed for several years in an adversarial relationship with the schools. Then, in 1977, the current principal, Dr. Steven Cole, came to the district. Dr. Cole had a positive view of the help and support community members could offer him and the school and began working with these parent committees, incorporating them into his communications network.

The parent action committee is currently made up of approximately 20 people, selected by individual organizations. They represent PTA's, clergy, teachers, students, and high school booster clubs. They meet on a monthly basis with a varied agenda. The group serves as a hot-line to clarify rumors heard in the community and to get information out to the community. Problems are straightened out and situations defused before they become crises reaching the board of education. The group has discussed drug problems and senior trips.

New curricula are explained and new teachers introduced. The agenda is flexible and most items come from issues brought up by members, not the administration. Dr. Cole and the school's administrative staff work closely with the committee, providing it with requested information. Dr. Cole is pleased with the spirit and interest shown by these community members.

Rumson Borough

Rumson's education committee also originated in a different form than the comprehensive one it now has. Four board of education members out of nine made up the original committee which reviewed curricular matters.

In 1978, however, when Richard DiPatri became superintendent, he began setting up discussion sessions which included staff, community members, and the board committee. Group members were seated in a circle, with their commentary on issues raised valued equally. Within a year, the education committee had evolved into a formal part of the school system. The chairperson is a board member and meetings are held once a month. Standard attendance is about 40 people. More people attend when something of particular interest or controversy is on the agenda. A separate committee for the gifted has been incorporated into the education committee and care is taken to cover its interests on most

agendas. Parents of special education children are especially encouraged to attend the meetings. There are usually twelve to fifteen teachers present at each meeting, representing all grade levels and special areas. The RBEA encourages their voluntary participation. Principals and coordinators of this K-8 district are also in attendance.

Ms. "Mike" Morehouse, chairperson for the past two years, likes the excellent interchange between staff and parents which occurs at the meetings. She feels it is useful for all involved. In her two years she has never seen any hostility. "Everyone seems to be open and looking to cooperate for the children," she says.

Board members in attendance try to keep their comments to a minimum. Community people wishing to attend do not have to let anyone know in advance. Agendas are published in newsletters and everyone interested is invited. Everyone coming to a meeting has an equal voice at that meeting, whether they have been there before or not.

Agenda items cover all aspects of school management. Curriculum ideas and revisions come to the committee from staff or administration before they are presented to the board. The committee may form recommendations on them for inclusion in the report to the board. Textbooks not only go to the committee for review before coming to the board, but announcements are made at local schools and during coffees that textbooks are available to parents for reading before final board approval is made.

One session of the education committee each year covers testing results, one concentrates on textbooks, and one covers the school budget. The latter meeting is timed so that the committee can review budget items pertaining to curriculum and make recommendations on those items before they go to the board. Major items recently discussed include homework policy, report cards, family life curriculum, sports and tournament play, a report on the 7th and 8th grade reading program, special education funding, review of language arts texts, and criteria for a student honor roll. Extracurricular activities also come under the purview of this committee. Ms. Morehouse reports an excellent program for lower school students came from a teacher on the committee who was concerned that most emphasis in that area seemed to be in grades 6-8.

Both Mr. DiPatri and Ms. Morehouse are enthusiastic about Rumson's program of involving community members in real decision-making. They feel it has not detracted from the board's legal responsibilities and has earned the board significant support in the community.

Salem City High School

In December, 1978, as an outgrowth of monthly parent meetings, Salem City began a community Magnet Program. This program consists

of a district-wide group which meets four times a year and numerous sub-groups which meet as often as they deem necessary, depending on the issue being studied. The district-wide group is made up of city government people, representatives of industry, teachers, citizens from the four communities sending students to Salem City, and parents. Membership is voluntary but all community groups are encouraged to have representatives attend. The emphasis is constructive.

Discussion centers on how those involved can be of assistance to the school. The cooperation among all groups is particularly significant since Salem City is an urban community, while its sending districts are rural.

The individual magnet groups focus on special interests such as discipline, testing, and special education. There are eight to ten different areas covered now by groups. As new concerns are identified, interested persons are encouraged to form a group to investigate the issue. Some groups are ongoing, while others last as long as necessary to satisfy their concerns and then disband. All magnet groups keep minutes, copies of which are disseminated at their meetings, sent to the city-wide group, and provided to the high school principal for his records.

It was this administrator, Norman Wilson, who started the program two years ago. Asking his administrators for names of community people, he called them together to discuss how to organize a citizens group to work with the high school. In September, 1979, a kickoff dinner was held, and community groups from all sections of Salem City and its sending areas were invited to send representatives. The response was tremendous. At least one person was present from every group contacted, and so was the entire Salem City Council and the Mayor.

The interest and cooperation demonstrated that night continues unabated. Industry helps support programs for the gifted and work/study programs. Over $260,000 was generated last year alone in the work/study program. Merchants involved in the work/study program provide feedback to the school on skills needed by students, based on their experience in working with the students.

The magnet groups meet as often as they wish, depending on their discussions. Meetings of all groups are posted, and any interested staff or administrators can attend. A group may also invite school personnel to make a presentation or provide it with information. For example, there was concern last year about the classification of some special education children. A magnet group formed, discussed legal requirements and classification labels with the high school administrators, invited special education experts from an Educational Improvement Center (EIC) to talk with them, and reviewed state regulations. When the concerns of the group were answered, they disbanded.

Any recommendations which come out of the magnet group deliberations are forwarded to the city-wide group for discussion at one of its quarterly meetings. If this group supports the recommendations, it sends them to the principal of the high school, who then forwards them to the superintendent and the board of education.

Principal Norm Wilson thinks the magnet program is a success, not only in involving parents and other community members in the education process, but in providing feedback to him on the concerns and interests of those he serves, and in making available to him resources he might not otherwise have been able to reach.

FOUR FROM ACROSS THE NATION — Louisville, William Penn School District, Salt Lake City, and Wilmington

Throughout the United States, there are a great variety of programs which involve community members in the schools. Described below are four of those programs — from Louisville, William Penn School District, Salt Lake City, and Wilmington. They have in common a continuing support among citizens, teachers, administration, and board of education for community involvement, as well as a record of successful achievement in how they accomplish it.

Louisville, Kentucky

As a large, urban district with 64 schools and over 44,000 students, the Louisville School Board believed they had become too large to have effective citizen involvement with the district as a whole. They were also concerned about administrative autonomy at the school level. In order to meet the two concerns of involving citizens and decentralizing the schools, the board of education adopted a policy permitting formation of a separate community school board for every school in the district. Citizens are now involved through these local school boards and the Louisville Public School Assembly (LPSA) which is the district-wide overseer.

Under the district board's guidelines, local boards must (1) have parents in the majority, (2) follow education mandates from the state, and (3) follow all contractual agreements made by the central board. Each local board establishes its own bylaws which determine how members will be elected and for what terms of office. The role of the principal, as either ex-officio or full voting member, is also set in the bylaws. These local boards send one representative to serve in the LPSA which meets regularly. At the LPSA level, PTA, district employee groups, and students are also represented.

The Louisville Associate Superintendent has pointed out that, while there have been problems and disagreements between the local boards and the district board, the formation of local boards and the Public School Assembly has achieved citizen involvement and local autonomy. "The local boards know just what they can and can't do. Everything is spelled out in writing. Moreover, the guidelines have been endorsed by central board members, administrators, principals, local board members, teachers, and students."

William Penn School District, Delaware County, Pennsylvania

William Penn School District is in suburban Philadelphia. The public school population is approximately 5,500 from a total population of 50,000. The school board and superintendent have, since 1972, worked toward increasing citizen involvement in substantive ways.

There are now several different groups with on-going responsibilities. The Community Relations Committee meets monthly and works with district personnel in public information areas. The Community Evening School is operated on a non-profit basis by a Citizens Council appointed by the school board. The Council chooses courses and employs the staff, while the district is responsible for the facilities and maintenance. The Desegregation Advisory Committee, composed of community members and staff, actively plans activities related to desegregation. The Long-Range Plan Citizens Advisory Committee met for over a year to research and draft a five-year plan for the district. The plan was approved as presented by the school board.

The district credits its efforts in the area of citizen involvement for the passage of bond issues totalling $14 million in the last four years, and for the implementation of a mandated desegregation plan without delay or court procedures. Also, two schools have been closed with support from citizens who were involved in the decision through advisory committees. The board and administrators believe the answer to increasing public support is increasing public involvement in its schools.

Salt Lake City, Utah

In 1973, the new superintendent brought to the district a firm belief in shared governance and a desire to implement it in the Salt Lake City schools. To accomplish this goal, two groups were established: school improvement councils which involve professional and non-professional staff in the running of their school, and school community councils which reached out to parents and community members.

The elementary school improvement councils are made up of two teachers, the union faculty representative, principal, an administrative assistant, a guidance counselor, the faculty advisor to student government, and a secretary or custodian. At the high school level, the council

is made up of two teachers — one from a non-academic subject and one from an academic subject — the faculty representative to the union, a guidance counselor, the principal, an assistant administrator, and a secretary or custodian. The councils determine their own agendas, keep minutes which are distributed through the school, and meet on a regular basis. They are authorized to establish and implement procedures and programs for their schools consistent with the policies of the board of education, subject to approval of the superintendent and ratification by their entire faculties.

Each local school also has a school community council. Membership is made up of the school improvement council, the PTA president and vice president, and six community members. The community members must represent all minority groups and all geographic areas of the school. The councils determine their own agendas and keep minutes for dissemination in the school community. These councils establish school hours, determine stipends for coaches and write discipline procedures.

The Superintendent, Dr. Don Thomas, believes that school councils ease the task of the district board of education. Problems which previously would have been discussed at a district-wide level can be taken care of by the building councils. "The board of education is, therefore, able to deal more effectively with the larger and more important items of general policy and long-range planning. Further, life becomes better for board members when they are not dealing with every minor controversy that develops in a school district."

Wilmington, Delaware

The school board of the Alfred I. duPont School District in Wilmington adopted, in 1971, a policy to encourage building-level advisory committees. The advisory groups now actively working in the district's 15 schools grew out of that policy.

Community elections determine members of the various committees. Each school attendance area is divided into geographic areas with representatives elected from each neighborhood region. The committees are governed by guidelines from the board (1) formal bylaws must be adopted within two months of election, (2) the council must meet at least four times each year, (3) minutes must be taken and distributed to the principal, PTA president, and district superintendent, and (4) the superintendent's administrative assistant must be recognized as the staff liaison between the council and the central office. The committees usually have 12 members with the principal as an ex-officio member. Nonparents are encouraged to become involved and the secondary schools include students in their membership. The committee agendas are devel-

oped by the members and have included everything from student smoking to division of school monies.

The board of education policy clearly states the rationale for developing these school committees. The scope and guidelines for their operation is clearly set out. The increased involvement of citizens with the schools and their interaction with school personnel has been a "real communications boost," according to a central office spokesman. Contrary to some initial concerns, citizen involvement at the building level is alive and working well in Wilmington.

STATE MANDATED PROGRAMS — The Experience of Florida, South Carolina, and California

Unfortunately, while individual programs of citizen involvement have generally been successful when instituted by supportive boards and administrators, the same cannot always be said for such programs when forced on local districts by a state board of education or state legislature mandate. This, anyway, has been the experience in the three states where impetus in citizen involvement came from mandates: Florida, South Carolina, and California.

Florida

In 1973, the Florida Legislature passed a series of laws concerning community involvement in the schools including Chapter 229.58, *District and School Advisory Committees.* Chapter 229 states that local boards "*may* establish an advisory committee broadly representative of the community, served by the school for each school in the district, and composed of teachers, students, parents and other citizens. If the school board does not establish advisory committees for each school, it *shall* establish a district advisory committee broadly representative of the district, and composed of teachers, students, parents and other citizens." [emphasis supplied] Each district may then, under the law, have individual school groups, but *must* have a district advisory committee. The functions of these committees are to be determined by the local boards of education and no committee "shall have any of the powers and duties now reserved by law to the district school board." The committees are required to assist in preparation of an annual report which is similar to that required in New Jersey. (See Legal Mandates for Citizen Involvement in New Jersey.)

In September of 1979, one of the legislators responsible for the 1973 law included, in a report on its implementation, the observation that implementation had been "at best very spotty among school districts." He

laid the reason for this lack of success to the fact that local educators did not understand the basic philosophy behind the law and, therefore, evidently found supporting it difficult. In July, 1980, Marshall Harris, Director of the Florida Educational Council, spoke at a New Jersey Educational Seminar on the success of school-based management in his state. Since 1973, he reported, 50 of the 74 districts had appointed district-wide advisory councils. Of this number about half had their membership elected. However, he stated that a 1978 study estimated that only about 10% of these 50 were actually meeting statutory intentions and, of the remaining, 70% were just token committees and 20% existed only on paper. Those which were functioning fully had been active in areas of school closings, discipline, and some superficial curriculum suggestions.

Florida's major response to the lack of cooperation in meeting the intent of Chapter 229 has been to provide grants from $500 to $5,000 to those districts with committees. The grants are to be used to improve the committee(s)' operations and to train staff and community members in running effective advisory groups. Statewide seminars are planned. Harris' group, made up of 21 people appointed variously by the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the Legislature, and including the Governor himself, is further charged to study the situation, develop a training manual for districts, and report all findings to the State Board of Education and the Legislature.

South Carolina

In 1977, the South Carolina Legislature passed a law requiring a school advisory council for every school building in the state. Makeup of these councils must include at least two parents, two teachers, and at high schools, two students. These representatives are to be elected by the groups they represent. Besides these members, the principal may appoint up to one-third of the council members.

South Carolina requires an Annual School Report to be submitted by each district. This report should describe the school program, define goals and objectives for the following school year, state student needs, list program improvements to meet those needs, and set budget priorities. The legislative charge to the school advisory councils was to assist in the preparation of this Annual School Report. The law includes a provision allowing the councils to submit their own Annual Report if they do not agree with that being submitted by the board of education.

South Carolina had had an active Citizens Coalition which helped push the law concerning the school advisory councils through the Legislature. This Coalition worked hard during the following year to inform and educate citizens groups so they would be ready to implement the law

after passage. As a result, by January, 1978, all but one school district had established a school advisory council.

The Citizens Coalition covered a broad base of interest groups. Members included the League of Women Voters, the American Friends Service Committee, the NAACP, and the state teachers union. The State School Boards Association did not join the coalition, but they did act as consultants to it. This broad-based support seems to have been the key to the quick implementation of the legislation and to the ready establishment of the councils. At presstime, the Legislature Oversight Committee of the South Carolina Legislature was compiling information on the effectiveness of the law and the school advisory councils from a random sampling of principals around the state.

California

In 1975, the California Commission for Reform of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RISE) included in its final report the following recommendations: (1) to involve learners, parents, staff and others in the decision-making process at the local and school system level, including involvement in the selection and review of staff; and (2) to make broad and effective use of human and physical resources in the community, and to use incentives to promote such community participation. Out of this report and the experimentation with decentralization in some local districts, Governor Jerry Brown began looking into transferring decision-making authority from the school district level to the school site. Hearings were held during 1975 and 1976 and, in 1977, the School Improvement Program was legislated in California. It was tied into the school finance reform resulting from the California Supreme Court's *Serrano vs. Priest* decision which, similar to New Jersey's *Robinson vs. Cahill* decision, struck down the existing methods of funding public education.

The School Improvement Program resembles the South Carolina plan in requiring a District Master Plan which lists program planning, implementation, and evaluation of present curricula. However, the California law is much more specific in outlining the roles and responsibilities of those in the district who will develop this Master Plan. Each local school must have a school site council. The first elements in the District Master Plan must be the adoption of policies for these councils, a listing of their responsibilities, and the procedures for their input in developing and updating the Plan. These councils must be made up of 50% schoolpeople and 50% parents. The majority of the schoolpeople must be teachers. Selection of all members is done by election or appointment by the groups they represent. Each member of the council has one vote and decisions are made by majority vote.

Besides helping develop the District Master Plan, each school site council must write a School Improvement Plan for its school. This plan states the skills students should be developing, assesses the degree to which the current program is achieving success in developing skills, outlines a plan to improve school programs, and describes the system designed to monitor and evaluate the improvement plan.

The success of the school site councils in California seems to vary from district to district. Those communities with active citizen's groups seem to be successful due to the efforts of these groups to remain involved. However, there seems to have been some conflict among parents, teachers, and principals. Dr. Charle Mae Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction for the California State Department of Education, in assessing the School Improvement Plan and the Site Councils, warned that the councils can be harmful if their majorities consistently oppose the judgment of the school principal. "We must have an exceptional principal at the school site, so I'm working closely with those administrators," she stated. The State Department continues to encourage boards to work closely with their school site councils, and to help parents and teachers become more involved in the management of their schools.

Summary

The Institute for Responsive Education in Boston recently published "Leading The Way: State Mandates For School Advisory Councils in California, Florida, and South Carolina." This report finds that school advisory councils, as evidenced in these three states, cannot effectively monitor school systems, but they can play a role as partners with school personnel in providing educational services. In this publication, IRE researchers say "...given the existing hierarchies of authority within school systems,...councils [cannot] play a realistic role in management and administration," unless supported by boards of education and central office administrators. Even then, without a formal place in the school district hierarchy, school councils rarely function effectively as watchdogs. They are best suited to working with local schools where they can join together with principal and staff to improve the education of the students in the building. The report recommends that school councils concentrate their efforts where they will do the most good — i.e. the individual school rather than on a district-wide basis.

TEANECK PARENT INFORMATION CENTER (TPIC)

— The creation of a new model for parent-community involvement in the public schools, using the printed word as the method for dialogue and accountability.

— The creation of a method to synthesize information which presents more complete pictures of issues than usually available.

— An outreach into the local community to find and use local talent with insights into current educational topics.

— A willingness and ability to discuss and deal with sensitive issues in a rational, democratic manner.

— The development of an advocacy unit which serves parents of handicapped children.

— The motivation of an all volunteer staff to successfully continue to meet the deadlines imposed by publishing a 12-page newsletter for 10 months a year.

These are the basic concepts of the Teaneck Parent Information Center (TPIC), a citizens group formed in 1977, and made up of parents, professionals, and members of the community-at-large who are interested in the quality of education provided the children in their school district. TPIC describes its goal as "develop(ing) increased communication among all ages and cultures.. based on fact and educated opinion. The outgrowth of this communication will be a more united community where all children, their parents and neighbors can work together for mutual physical, mental, social and spiritual growth."

TPIC has a resource board made up of volunteer local residents. These members share their professional expertise in education and education-oriented fields. They clip excerpts and articles from professional journals and newspapers for referral to a central coordinator who publishes them in a newsletter, ED-PAC, 10 times a year.

The glue that holds all this together is Marilyn Arons and her husband Raymond. Working out of their kitchen, they maintain voluminous files culled from newspapers and magazines. Topics include school classification, family life education, gifted programs, nutrition, racism in education, single parent problems, teacher preparation programs, youth employment, the voucher system, and school site management.

TPIC has a separate division in its files devoted to special education. They have catalogued every article on special education published in THE NEW YORK TIMES and local newspapers since 1977. In addition, there is a library of all major federal and state laws governing this area,

and a compilation of professional literature and budget data on national, state, and local levels.

Arons emphasizes the importance of the written word in linking school-home-community: "There is no enemy but ignorance." Faith in the community's ability to learn and respond if informed, belief in the good intentions of school personnel, and support for the family structure form the triad of values within which they work. "Writing is the best method of...communication. It demands thought, skill, structure, art and discipline...it is the ultimate form of accountability. It is quotable and lasting, impervious to 'I-Didn't-Mean', 'I-Didn't-Say', or 'Did-You-Hear-That?'"

Subscriptions to ED-PAC, a comprehensive objective, and thorough coverage of educational issues in New Jersey, are $5. Further information can be obtained by writing TPIC, 210 Carlton Terrace, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Citizen involvement in the schools can encompass more than input on and responsibility for management of normal operations during the school year. The buildings themselves represent, in most towns and cities, multi-million dollar structures which stand vacant and unused during much of the year — evenings, weekends, and vacation periods find them empty.

Since schools were built and are maintained by public tax dollars and since, in many cases, they contain top-notch recreational and meeting facilities — gymnasiums, playing fields, swimming pools, and classrooms — communities around the country are beginning to look at them with wider vision. Many educators and citizens are asking, why can't they be occupied for community needs when they are not being used for education of children?

Classrooms are being opened at nights and weekends for adult education courses in subjects ranging from English as a Second Language, to aerobics, and tying flies. Computer systems, previously in use for data processing and scheduling, are seeing service in classes for students and adults. School libraries can accommodate more than boys and girls, and the school cafeterias can feed more than those 18 years old and younger. While sports facilities are the first and the most common areas to be used after school by non-school persons, the range of community use of schools now seems limited only by the imagination of those in the community.

Community school advocates take the view that the schools do not belong just to staff and students — they belong to all the public. Their doors should be open to all needs — needs identified by the public, and

encompassing educational, cultural, recreational, health, and social activities for all citizens. The Federal Community Schools Act of 1974 defines community education as:

> "A program in which a public building, including but not limited to a public elementary or secondary school, or community or junior college, is used as a community center operated in conjunction with other groups in the community, community organizations, and local governmental agencies; to provide educational, recreational, cultural, and other related community services for the community, that center serves in accordance with the needs, interests, and concerns of that community."

This broad definition foresees a whole new concept in which the terms 'education' and 'schooling' are not synonymous. Spurred by the notion that schools have become isolated from the communities they were built to serve, and a growing realization that children learn as much outside the classroom as they do within it, education experts and community members alike are calling for a reassessment of education.

In their primer, *A New Foundation: Perspectives on Community Education*, written under a grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Vasil M. Kerensky and James D. Logsdon explain:

> "Education is not alone in the need for...basic stock-taking. Health programs, welfare programs, transportation systems...are built upon some assumptions and premises that need to be rethought. What is apparently missing in most of these programs is a broad strategy for effective change...Health programs cannot be addressed solely in hospitals.
>
> Transportation problems cannot be solved independently by the Highway Departments. Unemployment and welfare programs have roots that reach into health, education, community development, and a host of other factors in a community's life. The same holds true for educational problems. Schools *alone* cannot make much of a difference in an individual's life or a community's progress. In essence, the vision of community education is based on the recognition that it is the total community that educates."

Until such a massive reorientation can be accomplished, however, there are steps that can be taken now toward development of a community school. Many school systems have already opened up their buildings to the community. Recreational activities and adult education are the pro-

grams most commonly presented. However, in New Jersey, for example, there are fewer than a dozen full-scale community schools. The first one was started in Elizabeth in the early 70's.

One of the most comprehensive community school projects is the West Side Complex in Atlantic City. It opened in 1976 and is now one of two community schools in that city. The West Side Complex houses a normal K-6 school. There is also a Head Start program for pre-schoolers and another pre-school program run through state funding — the Center for Early Childhood Education. In addition, there is a branch of the local public library, a theater, a music center, a medical and dental clinic, neighborhood and health gyms, the community relations office of the local police department, a swimming pool, and two senior citizen areas.

Counseling and consumer education programs are available to the community at the Complex. There are prenatal services offered by the Atlantic City Health Department, and a Well-Baby Clinic providing child counseling and physical checkups.

The West Side Complex is successful because the people of Atlantic City work together to make it so. Principal Earl T. Brown has said, "While each co-sponsor is responsible for its own area of concern, the three co-sponsors, (Atlantic City Board of Education, Atlantic City, and Atlantic Human Services) continue to cooperate rather than conflict or compete with each other, in an effort to retain the total community service concept."

The Complex is governed by a 19-member advisory board aided by a committee of 60 people representing the interests of the total community. The three sponsoring agencies each have three representatives on the advisory board, while the majority control of 10 is elected from Atlantic City residents. Two of these 10 are high school students. Community needs continue to grow and the Complex hopes to be able to grow with them. Money has been a continuing problem, but state and federal grants have been a boon.

The West Side Complex has demonstrated amply that community schools bring community pride.

SOURCES OF HELP AND INFORMATION

There are several sources which would be helpful to those looking for further information in the area of citizen involvement. Some of these provide training and speakers along with pamphlets and resource materials. Such sources are described below.

1. National Committee For Citizens In Education (NCCE)

The National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) is an outgrowth of a group which began in the 1960's. NCCE was formed by

Carl Marburger following his tenure as Commissioner of Education in New Jersey. Dr. Marburger considers NCCE as an "advocacy, but not confrontational organization." Their basic belief is that the public can and should be a part of decisions made concerning education — and particularly their own chidren's education at their local school. In order to help accomplish such involvement, NCCE provides information and training for citizens on community involvement in the schools.

NCCE has published manuals and guidebooks on how to form citizen committees, and is currently emphasizing assistance to urban groups and development of coalitions of local citizen groups to help community members coordinate the use of resources available to them.

The Committee has recently received a grant to work in several states, helping parent and community groups develop a model for involving themselves in their schools. NCCE has selected New Jersey as one of those states.

For further information about NCCE and their services, contact Dr. Carl Marburger, Senior Associate for the National Committee for Citizens in Education, Suite 410, Wilde Lake Village Green, Columbia, Maryland 21044. Phone (301) 997-9300.

2. **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**

The purpose of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is to support programs which enhance community functioning through grants for lifelong learning and enrichment, and the fostering of interagency cooperation. It is a pioneer in the community education concept, and gives grants for training and improved leadership practices, as well as for improvement of community services. It gives no grants to individuals or for building or endowment funds.

For further information, write William F. Grimshaw, Director of Information, 500 Mott Foundation Building, Flint, Michigan 48502. Phone (313) 239-9441.

3. **Schoolwatch, Inc.**

"We are committed to the idea that, in a democratic society, citizens have a role to play and they should play that role," says Herb Green, Executive Director of Schoolwatch. Schoolwatch is one of the primary public organizations in New Jersey promoting citizen involvement in the schools. It formed initially in 1977 as a citizens coalition to monitor compliance with the new Public School Education Act of 1975 (the Thorough and Efficient Law), which said the state had an obligation to provide all children, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, with an education which would prepare them to function politically, economically, and socially in a democratic society.

Schoolwatch provides assistance to citizens groups around the state with training sessions, all-day seminars, and speakers for local programs on citizen involvement. The group encourages community people to become involved in school improvement in an effective and responsible manner. Emphasis is on positive involvement; informed citizens working with their local schools to create better educational opportunities for children.

Schoolwatch has contacts in over 50 districts around New Jersey and will provide names of people in a local area to those interested. They also give advice on forming citizen groups and will put people in touch with others already active in such programs.

For further information, contact Herb Green, Executive Director, Schoolwatch, Inc., 104 North Broad Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08608. Phone (609) 396-3222.

4. **Association for Community Education — New Jersey**

The purpose of this Association is to develop and implement Community Education in New Jersey, and to facilitate a clearer understanding of community education throughout the state. The Association encourages membership of anyone involved in adult education, either public or private, including those in social services, recreation, maintenance, senior citizen programs, public schools, colleges, and business and industry.

For further information, contact Ronald Butcher, New Jersey Department of Education, 225 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08625. Phone (609) 292-6370. Also John Radig, Educational Improvement Center — South, Box 209, Sewell, New Jersey 08080. Phone (609) 228-6000.

5. **Office of Parent Involvement — New Jersey State Department of Education**

The Office of Parent Involvement was created in January 1979, to help local school districts and educational interest groups promote parent involvement in the schools. The Office has been gathering information about various parent groups and district programs involving parents in New Jersey. Lists of these and other citizen organizations in the state are available. In addition, the Office is working with the Educational Improvement Centers, an arm of the State Department of Education, to expand information in this area and to run seminars and training programs.

For further information, contact Myra Hochman, Director of the Office of Parent Involvement, Bureau of Adult, Continuing, Community Education, 3535 Quakerbridge Road, Trenton, New Jersey 08619. Phone (609) 396-3222.

6. **New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA)**

Through the Field Services Department of the NJSBA, board members and administrators can obtain additional information and assistance on involving citizens in their schools. In addition, the NJSBA Management Information Department can provide sample policies and administrative regulations on the subject as part of its school management policies service. A Policy Portfolio on Citizen Involvement is available to board members and administrators.

For further information, contact Joseph Flannery, director of field services, or Dr. Philip Mackey, director of management information. The address is 315 West State Street, P.O. Box 909, Trenton, New Jersey 08605. Phone (609) 695-7600.

RESOURCE PUBLICATIONS

School Advisory Committees

Jean Rosaler, *How To Make The Best School Site Council In The World,* 1978, California State Department of Education, Bureau of Publications Sales, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, California 95802. Excellent handbook on developing, organizing, planning, and carrying on advisory committees. While the title refers to school site councils, advisory groups at any level will find the information and advice in this book invaluable.

William Rioux, *You Can Improve Your Child's School,* 1980, National Committee For Citizens In Education, Suite 410, Wilde Lake Village Green, Columbia, Maryland 21044. $12.95.

Carl Marburger, *Who Controls The Schools,* 1978, National Committee For Citizens In Education, Suite 410, Wilde Lake Village Green, Columbia, Maryland 21044. A handbook for citizens which explains the workings of school systems, the power structure, and the hows and whys of advisory councils.

Leading The Way: State Mandates For School Advisory Councils In California, Florida, and South Carolina, 1980, Institute for Responsive Education, 704 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215. $6.00. A report on the experience of these states to date.

School Site Management

Terry A. Clark, *Introducing School Site Management: A Framework For Citizen Involvement,* 1979, Schoolwatch, Inc., 104 North Broad

Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08608. $2.00. A thorough discussion with recommendations for implementation.

Jim Stanton, Ross Zerchykov, *Overcoming Barriers To School Council Effectiveness,* 1979, Institute for Responsive Education, 704 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215. $6.50. A complete report on the evaluation of school advisory councils as they have been functioning in a community in southern California, Fairfield and Calhoun Counties in South Carolina, and Yonkers, New York. Includes summary and recommendations for the future.

Community Schools

Vasil M. Kerensky, James D. Logsdon, *A New Foundation: Perspectives On Community Education,* 1979, Community Education Program, United States Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202. An excellent review of the subject, including historical and societal perspectives, and the roles various agencies play in the development of community education.

School Board Members And Community Education, 1979, Mid-Atlantic Community Education Consortium, c/o University of Virginia, School of Education, Ruffner Hall, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903. $1.00. An examination of selected school board members' views of their relationship with community education, and the ways by which they can stimulate interest in it.